

carbon emissions, and announcing withdrawal from the Paris climate accords—Luddite, ostrich-like, if there ever were, actions that can be described that way.

Recently, we heard of a new effort by the Trump administration to once again push back against efforts to address climate change. You see, it was probably embarrassing for President Trump when his own administration released the National Climate Assessment last year, as required by law, which outlined the severe and immediate impacts of climate change. According to reports, the White House now has plans to set up a fake panel of cherry-picked scientists who question the severity of climate change in order to counter the scientific consensus on this terribly urgent problem, even within the administration. This new fake panel will reportedly be set up under the National Security Council, not the EPA, not NOAA, or any of the Agencies where real scientists work—real climate scientists.

This is maybe the most conspicuous symptom of the disease of climate denialism that has infected the Republican Party and the hard right. This is beyond willful ignorance. This is the intentional, deliberate sowing of disinformation about climate science by our own government. This cannot stand.

This morning, I am announcing that if the Trump administration moves forward with this fake climate panel, we will be introducing legislation to defund it. I will be doing it, along with several of my colleagues. It is long past time for President Trump and Republican leaders to admit that climate change is real, that human activity contributes to it, and Congress must take action to counter it.

So far, Leader McConnell and our Republicans, when we ask them, do you believe climate change is real? Silence. Do you believe humans cause it? Silence. Do you believe Congress has to act to deal with it? Silence. That will not stand, and they will not be able to maintain that position over a period of time.

NORTH KOREA

Madam President, finally, on North Korea—and I appreciate the indulgence of my friend from Illinois. There are a lot of topics and a lot of things going on today.

As the President continues negotiations in Hanoi with the North Koreans, I want to restate that his goal should be complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of Korea. An agreement that includes significant U.S. sanctions relief in exchange for something short of that will be woefully insufficient. It will make North Korea stronger and the world more dangerous, not safer.

To simply say to North Korea that we are going to let you continue to be nuclear in exchange for something else—a peace treaty or some words, a photo op—that is not protecting the security of the United States.

I remind my colleagues, Congress passed sanctions against the North Korean regime for its appalling record on human rights. Congress would need to repeal that law for President Trump to give North Korea reliable sanctions relief.

The North Koreans themselves should realize many of us in Congress will not, will not, will not—no matter what President Trump does, many of us in Congress will not remove this sanction relief until North Korea denuclearizes, verifiably and irreversibly.

Make no mistake about it, no matter what President Trump does in Vietnam this week, this Chamber will have a significant role to play if President Trump decides to reduce sanctions as part of any deal with North Korea.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

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Mr. THUNE. Madam President, last night, for the second time in a month, Democrats objected to a bill to ban infanticide.

That statement to me is absolutely chilling, but for the second time in a month, Democrats objected to a bill that would do nothing more than state that a living, breathing baby born in an abortion clinic is entitled to the same protection and medical care as a living, breathing baby born in a hospital is entitled to.

It is a pretty basic bill. It just says that living, breathing, born human beings are entitled to protection even if they are born in an abortion clinic, but apparently that is not something Democrats are prepared to say. This is where Democrats' support for abortions has led them—to being unable to condemn infanticide.

Let's remember why we voted on this bill last night. We voted on this bill because the Democratic Governor of Virginia implicitly endorsed infanticide—because the Democratic Governor of Virginia got up and said that you could keep a living, breathing baby comfortable while you decided what to do with it.

There is only one answer to what you do with a living, breathing baby, and that is to provide it with the care it needs. A baby born alive in an abortion clinic is no less valuable and deserving of protection than a baby born in a delivery room.

It is horrifying that we are actually having a debate about this. Honestly, it is horrifying that the Democratic Party can't get up and say that infanticide is wrong. My Democratic colleagues like to talk about protecting the vulnerable, but how can they claim to care about helping those in need if they harden their hearts toward the most vulnerable among us? If they are willing to deny living, breathing babies basic medical care, do you really stand for the vulnerable if you can't stand up and say that infanticide is wrong?

It is terrible enough that we have so far betrayed our founding principles as

to deny the right to life of living, breathing unborn babies, but we are not even talking about abortion here. We are talking about withholding essential care from babies who are born alive. My Democratic colleagues can't even bring themselves to say this is wrong.

I would say to my Democratic colleagues, do you really want to be the party of Governor Northam? Do you really want to be the party of infanticide?

The American people don't agree with the Democratic Party on abortion and on infanticide. Most Americans believe that babies born alive after an abortion should be provided with medical care. Most Americans think there should be at least some limits on abortion. In fact, most countries in the world think there should be some limits on abortion. The United States is just one of a tiny handful of countries that allow elective abortion past 20 weeks of pregnancy. Among the others on that list are China and North Korea—not exactly the company we want to be keeping when it comes to protecting human rights.

A recent poll found that 71 percent of Americans oppose abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy. Yet the Democratic Party is aggressively embracing an agenda of zero restrictions on abortion, ever, up to—and now, apparently, after—the moment of birth.

I hope last night is not the last time we vote on the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act. I hope my Democratic colleagues have a chance to recast their votes. I hope, next time, they will decide to vote against infanticide. I hope, next time, they can affirm what should be a basic, foundational principle, and that is that every baby, wherever he or she is born, deserves to be protected.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I listened to the statements of my colleague from South Dakota. I would like to make a suggestion.

Since the Republicans are in control of the U.S. Senate, since there is a Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I would suggest to my colleague that perhaps we have a hearing on this bill he just described. You see, it came to the floor yesterday without any hearing. And the reason why we need a hearing is that many of us—many of us—voted for an infanticide law, which is currently on the books—a law that says that a child needs to be protected and that those who don't protect that child are subject to criminal penalties, as they should be.

Now, if this is a different approach to it, doesn't it at least merit a hearing from the Republican majority before it comes to the floor for a vote? There are many questions I would like to ask of those who propose this. I want to understand why the law that has been on

the books now for 17 years, as I remember, is inadequate to the challenges it faces.

I supported the infanticide law. I will continue to. If there are any changes that the Republicans want to make, is it too much to ask them to have a hearing in their own committee, which they chair, on this subject matter? I hope they will take it seriously enough to do it. Critics have said this has nothing to do with changing the law. It is just a “gotcha” vote on the floor—an amendment which may be used against candidates in future elections.

When it comes to children, something as serious as life and death should be taken much more seriously by the Republican majority.

AURORA, ILLINOIS, WAREHOUSE SHOOTING

Madam President, today is February 26. Eleven days ago, on Friday, February 15, an angry man with a history of violence and a Smith & Wesson .40 caliber pistol opened fire on his coworkers and police officers at a warehouse in Aurora, IL, about 40 miles from the city of Chicago.

In a matter of just a few minutes, five of this man's coworkers at the Henry Pratt Company were dead. He then shot and wounded five police officers who rushed to the scene. An hour and a half later, he died in an exchange of gunfire with other policemen.

The day before this horrible incident marked the anniversary of two other mass shootings: the 1-year anniversary of the Parkland, FL, shooting, which killed 17 high school students and staff, and the 11-year anniversary of a shooting at Northern Illinois University that left 5 students dead and 17 injured.

The gunman in the Henry Pratt warehouse massacre had just been told that day that he was going to be fired. His response was not just anger. His response was to pull out a firearm and murder five of his coworkers.

I want you to meet the victims of this man's violence. This is Trevor Wehner. Trevor was 21 years old. He was on the dean's list of Northern Illinois University's business college. He was on track to graduate this May.

Why was he at the Henry Pratt warehouse on that day? It was because he was on his first day of an internship at the business. Trevor was so excited about this opportunity to work at this business and to see what it was like to actually be in the real world that he showed up for his internship 45 minutes early that day. It was earlier than he should have. He was that excited. He died at the workplace that day.

This is Clayton Parks. He was known as “Clay” to his family and friends. He was the human resources manager at Henry Pratt. He was also an alumnus of Northern Illinois University. He had been working at the Henry Pratt Company for 4 months. He was 32 years old. He was married to his wife Abby and had a beautiful little 9-month-old baby boy, Axel.

I met them at Northern Illinois University when we held a vigil for Trevor

and Clay that afternoon. I talked to Clay's mom for the longest time. She wanted to tell me his whole life story, hoping that she could preserve the memory of this wonderful young man and what he meant to her.

Russell Beyer is over here. I went to his memorial service. He had been at Henry Pratt for more than 25 years. He was a mold operator and was the father of two grown children. He was also the chairman of the union at Henry Pratt.

In a terrible twist of fate, Russell had helped the gunman get his job back when the company first fired him 2 months earlier. Last Thursday would have been Russell's 48th birthday. Instead of a birthday party, his family and friends gathered that day at his wake. As I went into the funeral home in Montgomery, IL, I was struck by this fact. It turns out that the family decided that since Russell was such a passionate football fan, everybody should wear NFL jerseys. The room was filled with members of his family remembering him and paying tribute to him by wearing jerseys of all of the different teams they supported. Russell was a Patriots fan. He wore a Patriots jersey in his casket on the day that would have been his 48th birthday.

Vicente Juarez was a stockroom attendant and a forklift operator. He had been at Henry Pratt for 13 years, since the year 2006. Mr. Juarez and his wife of 38 years lived in a home in Oswego with their three grown children and eight grandchildren—all under one roof.

I will not forget that scene at the funeral home, either, because the family had decided that everyone would wear a T-shirt. It was a black T-shirt with a color photograph of Vicente in front of it and one of his favorite sayings on the back of it. There they were—grandchildren, children, older folks—all wearing those black T-shirts in honor and memory of this man.

I met his sister. His sister told me a story that Vicente was part of the family who immigrated to Illinois in 1972. There were five boys and five girls. They didn't have any money. Their father died 6 years after they immigrated. Yet they struggled and worked and stuck together as a family. That beautiful family—that beautiful family—had to shoulder this tragedy, where this gunman walked into that warehouse and killed Vicente.

Josh Pinkard's photograph is here. He was the plant manager. He joined Henry Pratt's parent company 13 years ago at a facility in his native Alabama. He and his wife had moved to Illinois with their three little kids last spring. As he lay dying, Josh pulled out his cell phone and texted his wife. His message was this: “I love you. I've been shot at work.” He died shortly thereafter. Josh Pinkard was 37 years old.

How did the police respond to this mass shooting? Every on-duty member of the Aurora Police Department rushed to the scene, where they were joined quickly by off-duty members of

the police department. Then, once the word got out that a policeman had been injured, hundreds of other policemen, firefighters, and other first responders all came to the scene.

I was on the phone with the Aurora police chief, Kristen Ziman. Kristen put out a statement, which I commended her for. It was the most eloquent statement. It said many things, but I want to repeat what it said. She said: “Every time an officer was hit, another one went in. No one retreated.”

All told, five members of the Aurora Police Department were injured by gunfire: Officer Adam Miller, Officer Marco Gomez, Officer John Cebulski, Officer James Zegar, and Officer Reynaldo Rivera. A sixth officer, Diego Avila, suffered a knee injury. They and hundreds of other police officers and first responders who rushed to the scene are heroes. Simply put, they are heroes. Their quick and courageous response certainly saved other lives.

Here is the cruel irony and tragedy beyond the loss of life. The gunman should never have had a begun. In 1995, this gunman pleaded guilty in the State of Mississippi to charges that he had beaten a former girlfriend with a baseball bat and stabbed her with a knife. He was sentenced to 5 years in prison. He served 3.

In January of 2014—19 years later—he applied for an Illinois firearm owner's identification card. He lied on that application. He said he had no felony record, and he was given permission under Illinois law to buy a firearm. He got away with that lie because the State of Mississippi had failed to submit his conviction record to the FBI's criminal background check system. He wasn't in the computer as being disqualified.

In March 2014, this man bought a handgun from a gun dealer in Aurora. Two weeks later, he applied for a concealed carry permit. This time he slipped up. He voluntarily submitted his fingerprints in the hopes that his concealed carry permit would be expedited. Those fingerprints finally exposed his felony record in Mississippi and his violent past.

The Illinois State Police got word of it, rejected his concealed carry application, revoked his firearm owner's identification card, and sent him a letter saying that he needed to surrender the Smith & Wesson firearm, which he used to kill these five innocent people and to injure these policemen. Obviously, he never surrendered the weapon. It was that same weapon that he used to kill these innocent people and to injure these policemen.

Almost 7 years ago, a disturbed young man opened fire in a movie theater in a suburb of Denver, killing 12 people and injuring 70 others. The name of that suburb was Aurora—Aurora, CO.

In a sad commentary on how frequent mass shootings have become in this great Nation, the police chief of